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Influences of Armenian Folk Music on Clarinet Chamber Works by Aram Khachaturian and Alexander Arutiunian

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INFLUENCES OF ARMENIAN FOLK MUSIC ON CLARINET CHAMBER WORKS

BY ARAM KHACHATURIAN AND ALEXANDER ARUTIUNIAN

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
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and Alexander Arutiunian

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INFLUENCES OF ARMENIAN FOLK MUSIC ON CLARINET CHAMBER WORKS BY ARAM KHACHATURIAN AND ALEXANDER ARUTIUNIAN

Introduction

Armenia has a rich cultural and musical history. The Armenian folk music tradition, developed over many centuries, is of great national significance to the Armenian people. Among other instruments, the clarinet has enjoyed a prominent place in the folk music tradition of Armenia. This project discusses the Armenian folk music elements in the clarinet chamber works *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* by Aram Khachaturian and *Suite for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* by Alexander Arutiunian. There are three sections of research: the study of Armenian folk music, the study of folk elements in the pieces by Khachaturian and Arutiunian, and the interpretation of the pieces and application to the clarinet. This research studies Armenian folk music and its characteristics, as described in written sources, as well as the compositional styles of Khachaturian and Arutiunian. Specific elements of the Armenian folk music tradition and their inclusion in these works were examined through listening to recordings and score study. The information gathered through this study produces a convincing interpretation of *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* by Khachaturian and *Suite for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* by Arutiunian.

Armenian History and Background

Armenia's location and history has contributed to the development of its culture and folk music. Armenia lies at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and Europe, neighboring Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran to the south. The country is a convenient passageway from the east to the west and has been troubled by numerous invasions and foreign rule for most of its history; consequently, various immigrants and their cultural

traditions are found in Armenia as well.¹ As a result, Armenian folk music shares characteristics with the folk music of neighboring Middle Eastern nations² yet maintains a national identity all its own.

In the twentieth century alone, Armenia experienced the 1915 Genocide, in which the Turks killed between 800,000 and two million Armenians,³ and saw the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The latter had a direct impact on the music and culture of Armenia and surrounding nations. One goal of the Soviet government, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, was the promotion of “European professional music” in place of traditional folk music because “the adoption of the Russian language and European art forms . . . were to be a means of cultural advancement.”⁴ Though the Soviet government sought to remove nationalism through the establishment of absolute equality, their efforts, like those of previous invading nations, only served to intensify nationalism within like-cultured groups, such as Armenia.⁵ As a result of such oppression from centuries past until the present, much of Armenian folk music has a sad, deeply emotional tone.

Characteristics of Armenian Folk Music

Folk music inundates the lives and customs of the Armenian people. Classical music, church music, and recently popularized pop music can all be considered folk music of today.⁶ However, this research is specifically concerned with the “historic traditional idioms of

1. Sirvart Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), 3-4.

2. Simon Broughton et al., ed., *World Music Volume 1: Africa, Europe and the Middle East* (London: Rough Guides, 1999), 333.

3. Andy Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 22.

4. Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 31.

5. Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 24.

6. Jonathan McCollum and Andy Nercessian, *Armenian Music: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Discography* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 3, 6.

Armenian music” not found in urban Armenia.⁷ Such folk music was documented extensively by Komitas Vardapet, born in 1869, who devoted his life to the collection, composition, and performance of Armenian folk songs; his work established folk music not as “light entertainment” but as “an art to be sought after and cultivated.”⁸ Thanks to the work of Komitas, documented Armenian folk song is available for study by scholars today.

Armenian folk song has a unique musical character. While most Western music centers on a tonic tone or tonal idea, many Armenian folk songs do not have a tonal center. Instead, this music is built on a combination of tetrachords (sequences of four neighboring tones)⁹ and includes no natural emphasis on one particular pitch.¹⁰ However, the repetition of a pitch with longer duration or in a lower register can serve as an establishment of a pitch center of the song.¹¹ Also common is the use of quarter tones and abundant improvisation.¹² Any scales used in Armenian music are often fragmented and have pentatonic, tetrachordal, or modal qualities.¹³

Armenian folk songs use simple melodies to communicate complex emotion. Monophonic melodies are accompanied an unceasing, single-note drone instead of the chordal harmonies of Western tradition.¹⁴ Most songs include only one melodic phrase, which is

7. Sirvart Poladian, “Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology: Komitas the Pioneer,” in *Essays on Armenian Music*, ed. Vrej Nersessian (London: Kahn & Averill, 1978), 19.

8. Poladian, “Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology,” 13-14.

9. Komitas, “The Singing of the Holy Liturgy,” in *Armenian Sacred and Folk Music*, trans. Edward Gulbekian (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 125; Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 9.

10. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 7.

11. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 39.

12. Broughton, *World Music*, 333.

13. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 15.

14. Broughton, *World Music*, 333.

extended and embellished throughout its duration.¹⁵ Embellishments are familiar to Armenian folk music. The use of anticipation is common, as well as the use of mordents, grace notes, turns, and trills in “cadenza-like form.”¹⁶ Special embellishments employed by singers involve quick register changes and rapid glissandos between distant notes.¹⁷ Embellishments serve to further communicate the emotion and mood of the folk song text. In many circumstances, nonsense syllables are included in the song to continue the rhythm, melody, or expression of emotion where the poetry ends.¹⁸ Songs that begin slowly and become more elaborate as they progress are also common and serve similar emotive purpose.¹⁹

The usual range of pitches for an Armenian folk song is limited, especially in comparison to its expressive power. Though the range of the human voice is reasonably unrestrained, the ranges of accompanying instruments necessitate a narrower tonal focus. This is mainly because early folk instruments could reach four to seven pitches at most, corroborating the fact that most Armenian folk songs are contained within the interval of a fifth, with occasional ornamentation beyond.²⁰ Although technology and instrument construction have advanced beyond the original capabilities of Armenian folk music, the style persists unchanged.

Although Armenian folk melodies are usually contained within a narrow range, larger intervals still appear and serve certain expressive purposes. Large intervals serve as emphasis to the text, accompaniment to an exclamation, or as the climax of a piece because they are viewed

15. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 38.

16. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 24.

17. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 21.

18. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 46.

19. Poladian, “Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology,” 20.

20. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 26-27.

as most expressive; large intervals also provide balance and contrast to surrounding smaller intervals.²¹ Other intervals have unique usage as well, and some are nonexistent in Western notation. The interval of a fourth is often found at the beginning or end of phrases, while neutral thirds and sixths, which lie between the major and minor thirds and sixths of Western notation, are also present.²² Because the study of Armenian folk music has necessitated the translation of Armenian melodies to Western musical notation, many of the subtleties of the style, such as quarter tones and neutral thirds and sixths, have no distinct notational representation.²³ The responsibility falls on the performer to gain understanding of and incorporate these particular elements into their studies and performances of Armenian folk songs.

Rhythmic patterns in Armenian folk music differ from the structured meter patterns found in Western music. Many songs have no written meter signature, allowing the text of the song or the emotions of the performer to determine rhythmic structure and pattern.²⁴ Songs that have a written metric plan likely include mixed meter, use triple meter more frequently than duple, and include syncopation.²⁵ Because many Armenian folk songs are sung as the people complete their daily work and chores, the rhythm of the music mirrors the rhythm of their specific work; therefore, working songs usually contain a regular rhythm and tempo.²⁶

21. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 22, 20.

22. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 22, 5.

23. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 5.

24. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 32-33.

25. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 32; Cynthia Wolverton, "The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire," *The Clarinet* 31, no. 3 (June 2004), 53; Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 33-34.

26. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 33-34.

Performance Context

Folk music inundates not only the work, but also the lives and customs of the Armenian people. To the people of the villages, singing about the events of their lives is an improvisatory and continual act; to them, these are not demonstrations of creative art but are a mode of communication and emotional expression as familiar as spoken language.²⁷ Though “musical dialect” varies from region to region, similar to variation in spoken language dialect,²⁸ the motivation for musical expression remains constant. The Armenian people sing for certain occasions, or for no reason at all, simply because their lives and surroundings inspire them to do so. They sing in spring for the “awakening of nature,” in summer while working in the fields, in autumn with thanksgiving for the harvest, and in winter to pass the time.²⁹ The permanence of this music is not of high importance, nor is the concept of who has composed it; instead, memorable songs were passed orally from generation to generation.³⁰ To the Armenian people, composition and performance are one.

Folk Instruments

In his research, Komitas Vardapet found that folk singing developed before the playing of folk instruments, though both have been common practice for centuries.³¹ Armenian folk instruments include: the “*tar* (short-necked lute), *kanon* (dulcimer), *oud* (unfretted lute), *kamancha* (upright fiddle), *zurna* (shawm), . . . *davul* (double-headed hand drum),”³² and the

27. Poladian, “Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology,” 19.

28. Poladian, “Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology,” 23.

29. Poladian, *Armenian Folk Songs*, 47.

30. Poladian, “Komitas Vardapet and his Contribution to Ethnomusicology,” 19, 23.

31. Komitas, “The Singing of the Holy Liturgy,” 124.

32. Broughton, *World Music*, 333.

duduk, an instrument especially significant to Armenia. The *duduk* is of particular interest in this study both because of its relationship to the clarinet in this context and because of its importance to Armenian culture and national identity.

The *duduk* is a woodwind instrument made from apricot wood and a cane reed with a range of about an octave.³³ It has been described as “the most affectionate of all instruments” and “the most Armenian of all instruments.”³⁴ Most *duduk* music is deeply sad and free of structured rhythm; therefore, it is a difficult instrument to master because of the great emotional investment it requires of the player.³⁵ The *duduk* is also strongly connected to ideas of Armenian national identity and is viewed as a “symbol of the country”³⁶ to many Armenians. Djivan Gasparyan, a well-known Armenian *duduk* player states: “In its tiny holes [the *duduk*] bears the cry of Armenia’s bitter past.”³⁷ Aram Khachaturian, a prominent Armenian composer, was also deeply moved by the music of the *duduk*, acknowledging: “The *duduk* is the only instrument that can make me cry.”³⁸ His affection for the instrument caused him to emulate its characteristics in his compositions. His *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* was written in imitation of the *duduk*, *kemancha*, and [*davul*], respectively.³⁹

33. Broughton, *World Music*, 334.

34. Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 3.

35. Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 56-57, 94.

36. Broughton, *World Music*, 335.

37. Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 56.

38. Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 56.

39. Victor Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, trans. Nicholas Kournokoff and Vladimir Bobrov (New York: Sphinx Press, 1985), 49-50.

Different Styles of Armenian Clarinet Playing

Two different styles of clarinet playing exist in Armenia: folk style and classical style. The two styles are separate, and because each requires mastery of its own special technique, it is difficult for one person to play professionally in both styles.⁴⁰ Like all folk instruments, including the *duduk*, it takes great skill to play the folk clarinet convincingly. The style includes complex rhythms, improvisation, quarter tones, abundant trills, and the use of circular breathing.⁴¹ However, folk musicians receive no formal music education. Many talented musicians play by ear and have no effective knowledge of musical notation.⁴² Instead, the tradition of playing is preserved by passing unwritten techniques from master to pupil within informal contexts.⁴³

The classical style of clarinet playing is newer to Armenia than the folk style. Though many contemporary Armenian composers have written clarinet works in Western musical style, many are unfortunately unknown outside Armenia. According to Alexander Manoukian and Cynthia Wolverton, “practically all [Armenian] composers working in the instrumental genre have produced some compositions for clarinet,”⁴⁴ but a “great deal of Armenian music remains unfamiliar to most clarinetists.”⁴⁵ The pieces under consideration in this project combine elements of classical clarinet technique and the character of folk music.

40. Alexander G. Manoukian, “The Clarinet in Armenia,” *The Clarinet* 26, no. 4 (September 1999), 39-40.

41. Manoukian, “The Clarinet in Armenia,” 39.

42. Manoukian, “The Clarinet in Armenia,” 39; Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia*, 76.

43. Manoukian, “The Clarinet in Armenia,” 39-40.

44. Manoukian, “The Clarinet in Armenia,” 41.

45. Wolverton, “The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire,” 52.

The Composers and Their Works

Aram Khachaturian was born on the sixth of June, 1903 (d. 1978), to Armenian parents in Tiflis, Georgia, a center of Armenian cultural activity.⁴⁶ From an early age, Khachaturian was immersed in the music of his heritage. Folk songs sung by his parents were prominent sounds of his childhood; they had a strong impression on him. Consequently, Khachaturian was forever drawn to the “pure” art of the folk musicians.⁴⁷ Young Khachaturian was self-taught at first, driven by curiosity and imagination; later he traveled to Moscow with his older brother to study music at the Moscow Conservatory.⁴⁸

In his composing, Armenia was Khachaturian’s focus. His compositions “[attempted to capture] the Armenian spirit”⁴⁹ by including traditional elements of Armenian music.⁵⁰ He also intended to work in Armenia and promote the arts there when he finished school.⁵¹

Khachaturian’s love of his country naturally translated to nationalism in his work. According to Khachaturian himself, “Gnessin [his teacher] convinced me that only deeply national art, and not imitative art, could be appreciated by the public.”⁵² The people of Armenia were not something Khachaturian could easily forget:

I am moved to tears by the aroma of Armenian smoke hugging the roofs of the houses. It awakens in me some very distant associations so familiar since childhood, a night spent in a village, a sad song heard at a distance, as though from beyond the mountains.

46. Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 2, 5; McCollum and Nercessian, *Armenian Music*, 95.

47. Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 8.

48. Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 9-10, 29.

49. Wolverton, “The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire,” 57.

50. Broughton, *World Music*, 335.

51. Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 34.

52. Aram Khachaturian, quoted in Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 29.

I consider myself in debt to my people, who are so affectionate toward me. There can be no greater reward for an artist than the love I experienced in my homeland. . . . I am prepared to do everything in my power for my native Armenia. There is still so much I must write and write well to justify what my people give me.

As for serving the Armenian people, my whole life, everything I have created, belongs to them.

I was overjoyed to learn that the song from the film *Pepo* is so popular. Some . . . had considered it a folk song.

What can be more gratifying to a composer than the realization that the people have made his song their very own!”⁵³

Aram Khachaturian wrote *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* in 1932 during his study at the Conservatory.⁵⁴ This instrumentation was original for its time;⁵⁵ one reason Khachaturian gave for its selection was a “desire to break the tradition.”⁵⁶ The piece is filled with elements of Armenian folk music and was written in imitation of the folk instruments *duduk*, *kemancha*, and *davul*.⁵⁷ Though Khachaturian received criticism upon the publication of his composition, he declared the dissonances in question were comforting consonances to his ear.⁵⁸ To the “modern” ear these dissonances are much more acceptable than they were in the 1930s.

Alexander Arutiunian (1920-2012), an Armenian composer and pianist, graduated from the Yerevan State Conservatory in Armenia in 1941; he later studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1946 to 1948.⁵⁹ He received the Laureate of Stalin Prize (USSR State Prize) in 1949, the People’s Artist of Armenia Prize in 1962, the People’s Artist of USSR Prize in 1970,

53. Aram Khachaturian quoted in Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 193.

54. Wolverson, “The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire,” 57.

55. Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 49.

56. Aram Khachaturian, *Collected Works*, quoted in Cynthia Wolverson, “The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire,” *The Clarinet* 31, no. 3 (June 2004), 58.

57. Yuzefovich, *Aram Khachaturyan*, 49-50.

58. Wolverson, “The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire,” 58.

59. Wolverson, “The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire,” 52.

the State Prize of Armenia in 1972, and the Orpheus Award (USA) in 1983.⁶⁰ Also, he served as artistic director of the Armenian Philharmonic Society, he was a teacher of composition at the Yerevan Conservatory, and he belonged to the Union of Cinematographers of Armenia.⁶¹

Suite for Clarinet, Violin and Piano by Alexander Arutiunian was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio from Michigan State University and was premiered by the group in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1992.⁶² This piece also contains abundant elements of Armenian folk music.

Discussion

While the composers' heritage and sources of musical inspiration for the pieces *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* by Khachaturian and *Suite for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* by Arutiunian are very similar, differences arise in the number of movements within the pieces, the dates of composition (which are separated by sixty years), and, most significantly, the approaches used in incorporating the Armenian folk elements which inspired the composers.

Aram Khachaturian's *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* contains elements of Armenian folk music, specifically: the absence of a clear tonal center, a prevailing minor tonal quality, a narrow range, grace notes used as embellishment, monophonic melodies, mixed meter, and passages with a free or improvisatory rhythmic feel. The work does not have a strict tonal basis, as may be seen in Western music, but rather a key area that is loosely followed. The *Trio* is largely diatonic; the first two movements of the three are in predominantly minor keys. The first movement is in G minor. In the second movement, the first 14 measures have modal qualities but settle into C minor at the *allegretto* in measure 15. In measure 71, the Ab minor key area is

60. Karen Dannessa, "Errata for the *Suite* for Clarinet, Violin and Piano by Alexander Arutiunian," 1; Wolverton, "The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire," 52.

61. Karen Dannessa, "Errata for the *Suite* for Clarinet, Violin and Piano by Alexander Arutiunian," 1; Wolverton, "The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire," 52.

62. Wolverton, "The Contributions of Armenian Composers to the Clarinet Repertoire," 52.

introduced, which is solidified at the *allegro agitato* in measure 79. Measure 101, marked *piu presto*, is based on an octatonic scale (see figure 1), which gives way once more to C minor at the *moderato pesante* in measure 114. The movement concludes as it began, with modal

The image shows a musical score for measures 101-104 of the second movement of Khachaturian's Trio. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a violin staff and a piano staff. The violin part is marked 'piu presto' and 'f'. The piano part is marked 'ff' and 'piu presto'. The second system continues the piano part with a 'ff' dynamic. The music is characterized by rapid sixteenth and thirty-second note passages, often with slurs and accents, creating a dense and rhythmic texture.

Figure 1: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 2, mm. 101-104.

inflections and a return to the initial tempo in measure 138. In contrast to the first two movements, the third movement begins in the key of C major, where it remains for the majority of its duration. Beginning in measure 204 the piece briefly visits key of G major before entering the final key area of E-flat minor at the *meno mosso* in measure 224, as the violin presents the theme in a minor key. The piece ultimately ends on a C minor chord.

The melodies found in the *Trio* have narrow ranges, though larger intervals are periodically employed for embellishment. In the first movement, the initial presentation of the theme by the clarinet (measures 4 to 13) is contained within the range of a ninth and makes frequent use of stepwise motion (see figure 2, upper line). In contrast, the simultaneous violin

Figure 2: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 1, mm. 4-13.

accompaniment spans a range of nearly three octaves (G_3 in measure 6 to F_6 in measure 9). In measures 29 and 55 the tempo changes to *lento*, the dynamic markings indicate *piano*, and the clarinet plays a descending octave interval, emphasizing the corresponding change in musical mood (see figure 3). The theme of the second movement, beginning in measure 15, is contained

Figure 3: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 1, m. 29.

within an octave; all pitches other than the first are contained within the interval of a fifth (see figure 4). The third movement begins with an unaccompanied setting of the theme (see figure 5),

Figure 4: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 2, mm. 15-30.

Figure 5: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 3, mm. 1-7.

which is reminiscent of the monophonic melodies of Armenian folk music. This theme is comfortably situated within the range of a fifth. The supporting material in measure 25 also has a narrow range and is constructed almost exclusively of stepwise motion (see figure 6). In contrast,

Figure 6: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 3, mm. 25, 26-28.

the violin figures like those in measures 170 (see figure 7, lower line), 172, and 174 contain



Figure 7: Khachaurian, *Trio*. Movement 3, m. 170.

rapid register changes accompanied by a *sforzando* indication, which embellish and contrast the clarinet's melodic line. Also, not only do the melodies found here reside within a narrow range, but they are formed of a select few pitches found in that range. For example, the same figure found in the clarinet in measure 165 (see figure 8, upper line) and in the violin in measure 179 is



Figure 8: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 3, mm. 165-170.

contained within an octave; however, only five notes of the octave are used in the construction of this melody. Likewise, the clarinet plays only three different pitches from measure 236 to the end of the piece, with a brief hiatus in measures 241 and 242 in which the figure is played by the violin. Important to notice as well is the widespread use of grace notes as embellishment throughout the piece.

As is common in Armenian folk music, the *Trio* contains several instances of mixed meter and free rhythmic feel. Numerous passages of rapid sixteenth notes, though metrically even, point to the embellished, improvisatory style of Armenian folk music. The first movement is primarily in common time, except for a recurring figure in 3/4 time occurring in measures 12

(see figure 9), 19, 37, and 44. In measure 26 (see figure 10), the written indication *quasi cadenza*

Figure 9: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 1, mm. 10-12.

indicates the performer may freely draw out the written rhythm. The second movement maintains

Figure 10: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 1, mm. 26-27.

triple meter throughout, though the tempo fluctuates from section to section. It also contains two measures, 49 and 50, indicated *allargando* (see figure 11). Movement three begins in duple



Figure 11: Khachaturian, *Trio*. Movement 2, mm. 49-50.

meter with a solo by the clarinet (refer to figure 5). This allows slight rhythmic freedom that is later limited by the addition of the piano's steady rhythmic figure in measure 13. Beginning in measure 107, strands of triplets are introduced with increasing frequency until all parts are in triple meter at measure 159. In measure 224, duple meter returns to end the piece.

The Armenian folk elements found in Khachaturian's *Trio* are also found in Alexander Arutiunian's *Suite for Clarinet, Violin and Piano*, though they are employed to different degrees. Unlike the *Trio*, very little material in the *Suite* has a diatonic tonal basis. The first movement, "Introduction," has a tetrachordal and chromatic basis and includes an octatonic figure in the violin part beginning in measure 33 (see figure 12); interestingly, the movement ends on a D

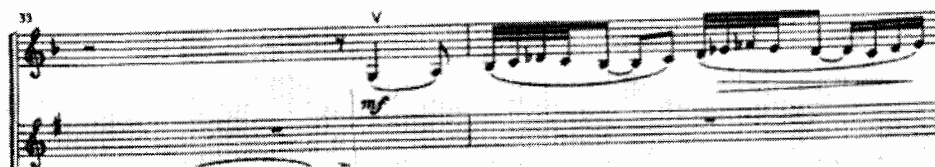


Figure 12: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 1, mm. 33-34.

major chord. The thematic material in movement two, "Scherzo," is primarily tetrachordal with occasional octatonic fragments. The third movement, "Dialog," begins with a sojourn in G minor

for three measures; the rest of the movement is based on tetrachordal fragments. In the last movement, “Final,” the thematic material has an octatonic tonal basis (see figure 13). A middle



Figure 13: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 4, mm. 4-7.

section (measures 42 to 80) of contrasting character has the diatonic basis of E minor and gives way to embellished statements of the original theme again in measure 81.

Melodic range in the *Suite* is confined, though not so narrow as that in the *Trio*. This is partially due to the fact that in the *Suite*, the beginning and ending points of each melodic figure are not always clearly defined; rather, the melody changes parts frequently and often joins seamlessly to the countermelody and accompaniment lines. Melodic events in the first movement are contained within approximately the range of an octave; this is exemplified in the violin in measures 5 to 13 and in the clarinet in measures 14 to 17 (see figure 14). Monophonic settings of



Figure 14: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 1, mm. 14-17.

the melody in measures 1 to 4 and measure 34 (refer to figure 12) are characteristic of Armenian musical style. Rapid changes in register are employed for emphasis and are almost always in

anticipation; for example: measures 28 (see figure 15), 33, 45, 46, 48, 49, and 52. The range of

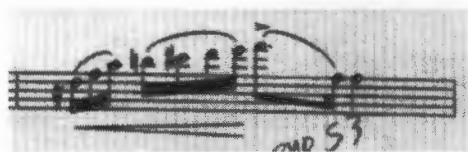


Figure 15: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 1, m. 28.

the second movement's thematic material exceeds an octave. A common figure throughout is the octave leap, such as that found in the theme in measure 5 (see figure 16), which provides

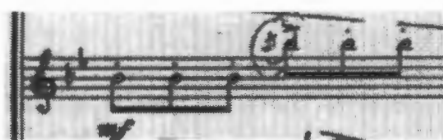


Figure 16: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 2, m. 5.

embellishment through a rapid change in register. Other embellishments in this movement include a brief drone figure in the clarinet in measure 58 and wide descending leaps which are resolved upward by a half step, found in measures 25 to 28 (see figure 17). Similar figures are

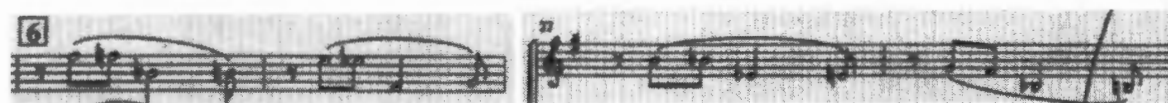


Figure 17: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 2, mm. 25-26, 27-28.

found in measures 22 to 24 of the third movement (see figure 18), though here they are ascending leaps resolved by a half step downward. The first eight measures of the third



Figure 18: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 3, mm. 22-24.

movement (see figure 19) also include a melancholy, monophonic melody in Armenian



Figure 19: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 3, mm. 1-8.

character. In the fourth movement, the initial theme is composed almost entirely of stepwise motion and has a relatively narrow range. The melodic material in the contrasting E minor section contains much wider intervals, but the initial theme returns again with variation and embellishment. Octave leaps are used for embellishment and emphasis. The use of embellishing grace notes is more limited in the *Suite* than in the *Trio*, though they are more frequently used in the faster movements such as the theme of the second movement (refer to figure 16) and measures 127 to 138 of the fourth movement (see figure 20).

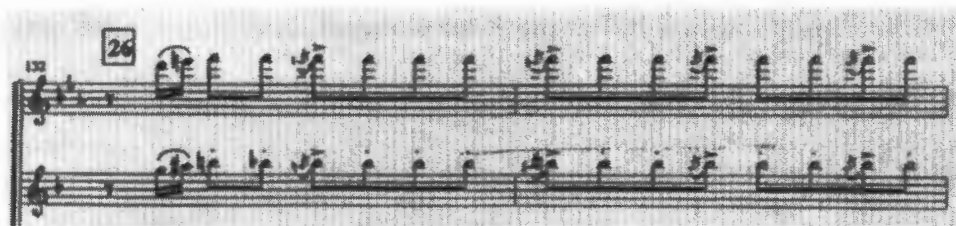


Figure 20: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 4, mm. 132-133.

Like Khachaturian's *Trio*, Arutiunian's *Suite* contains several instances of mixed meter and free rhythmic feel. The first movement is entirely in slow common time, indicated *lento*.

Measures 33 to 35 (refer to figure 12) in the violin and measure 55 in the clarinet (see figure 21)



Figure 21: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 1, m. 55.

have a free rhythmic feel due to the nature of the line and absence of accompaniment. The second movement is strictly rhythmically driven from beginning to end. While the written meter signature never strays from 6/8, the beats of emphasis do change throughout the movement. Beginning in measure 1, the metric emphasis occurs on two beats per measure; however, in measures 17 to 18, 33 to 34 (see figure 22), 37 to 40, 44, and 90 to 95, the primary emphasis is

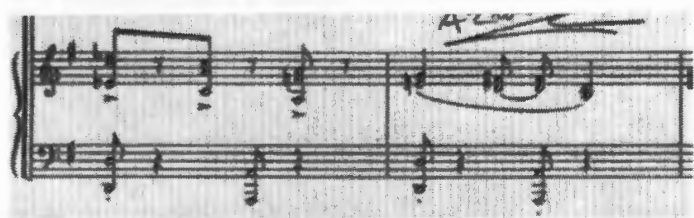


Figure 22: Arutiunian, *Suite*. Movement 2, mm. 33-34.

three beats per measure, based on the notation. Reminiscent of the first movement, the third movement is also in slow common time, marked *adagio*. The violin solo in the first nine measures (refer to figure 19) is rhythmically free and improvisatory. The addition of the clarinet in measure nine adds slightly more rhythmic accountability, though the entire movement is relaxed in pulse. This is partially due to the absence of any sort of rhythmic piano accompaniment, which is present in other movements. Like the second movement, the fourth movement is rhythmically driven; however, this movement is in common time. Syncopated rhythm is present throughout the movement, which serves as accompaniment material in places such as measures 1 to 15 in the piano, but it serves as prominent melodic material in measures 132 and 133 (refer to figure 20) when played by the violin and clarinet in unison.

Interpretation and Application to the Clarinet

In the works *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* and *Suite for Clarinet, Violin and Piano*, Aram Khachaturian and Alexander Arutiunian incorporate similar Armenian folk elements with different techniques. Both pieces employ monophonic melodies with a fairly narrow range. Most of the time, melodies are contained within the range of an octave—often within a fifth in the *Trio*. The melodies are largely built from stepwise motion, though rapid octave leaps are commonly used for embellishment and emphasis. One of the greatest differences between the two pieces is their tonality. Khachaturian's *Trio* is largely diatonic with a mostly minor tonality, but Arutiunian's *Suite* is generally based on fragments and combinations of tetrachords. Interestingly, material based on the octatonic scale is found in both pieces, though such material is more extensive in the *Suite*. It is difficult to determine if these differences in the incorporation of folk elements in the *Trio* and *Suite* are due to composer preference and style, differences in

education, or the sixty years that separate the two compositions; likely all variables contribute. The inclusion of these folk elements is almost certainly intentional

By identifying Armenian folk elements that are incorporated into both these pieces, an Armenian compositional style emerges. This style combines overarching Western musical style and structure with elements that are distinctly Armenian. While identification of the style is significant itself, this information is also significant for performers of the pieces discussed. The performer of Aram Khachaturian's *Trio* and Alexander Arutiunian's *Suite* should be aware of the presence of Armenian character in these pieces, displayed through the incorporation of Armenian folk elements. Understanding the mournful quality of Armenian folk music—a result of many years of foreign oppression—is an important starting point, especially when performing the slow movements of these pieces. Because the melodies found here are deeply emotional, suggestive of Armenian folk music, it is important that the performers create adequate balance within the ensemble to allow the melodic material to be prominent. Also, even though these melodies have a narrow range, they must be deeply expressive. The restricted melodic range requires that performers be creative in finding other ways to convey emotion while playing these pieces. Taking care to dynamically shape each individual phrase and taking time to consider how each interacts with the surrounding phrases should always be an objective for performers. In the *Trio*, it is known that Khachaturian was intending to imitate particular folk instruments. Therefore, as the clarinetist in particular performs Khachaturian's *Trio*, the player should consider that the part was written in imitation of *duduk* music, which is deeply emotional and mournful, and they should strive to emulate such a tone in their playing. In both pieces achieving a polished, "classical" tone should not be the main objective.

Both Khachaturian and Arutiunian incorporate the mixed meter and syncopation common to Armenian folk songs in their pieces; however, Arutiunian does so while maintaining a constant meter signature throughout each movement while Khachaturian includes many written changes in meter signature to achieve the effect. Both pieces also include sections that feel rhythmically free but are still governed by the underlying meter signature—an imitation of the improvisatory and emotional nature of the folk music. Khachaturian spreads such sections throughout his work, but Arutiunian uses them more sparingly and in concentration. For example, the second and fourth movements of the *Suite* are rhythmically driven and contain no free-feeling rhythms, but its third movement can be felt in nearly exclusive free rhythm.

The rhythmic material of the pieces is another important consideration for performance. The mixed meter in the *Suite* especially must be brought out by emphasis on the part of the performers, because these changes in meter are accomplished through changing notation in the score, rather than in a written meter signature. In both pieces, the rhythmically free and expressive segments should receive special attention. The freedom of expression permitted in these sections is important to practice because it so strongly points to Armenian folk music.

An additional recommendation for instrumentalists interested in performing pieces like these, which contain elements of folk music, is to practice octatonic scales. Octatonic scales are common to Armenian folk music and are not usually included in typical daily scale exercises. Practicing them will make many folk-inspired passages technically easier to play, and practice will also familiarize the performer with their tonal qualities and unique sound.

While this research has briefly outlined Armenian compositional style, based on Armenian folk music, study in this and other areas of the field are far from complete. According to Hachig Kazarian, “folk music . . . is perhaps the most neglected area of Armenian music

studies.”⁶³ Also, music by contemporary Armenian composers is abundant, but relatively little is known about it by many musicians in the West. Generally, more research is needed in the area of Armenian folk music and specifically in the English language. While a considerable amount of research exists in the Armenian language, translation is needed to make those resources available to English-speaking students and researchers. As the Armenian compositional style is studied further, it is hoped that its influence will be evident in both works for clarinet and other instrumentation.

64. Hachig Thomas Kazarian, “The Modal Systems of Armenian Sacred Music” (master’s thesis, Eastern Michigan University, 1983), 124.

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